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Russia's RT Slams Facebook For Suspending Anti-US, Pro-Kremlin Viral Video Channels

By Arthur Villasanta 02/18/19 AT 11:23 PM

5-6 minutes

RT (formerly Russia Today), the international TV network funded by the Russian government, is pushing back hard against Facebook for taking-down three online video channels airing anti-American content. The websites are owned by one of its subsidiaries.

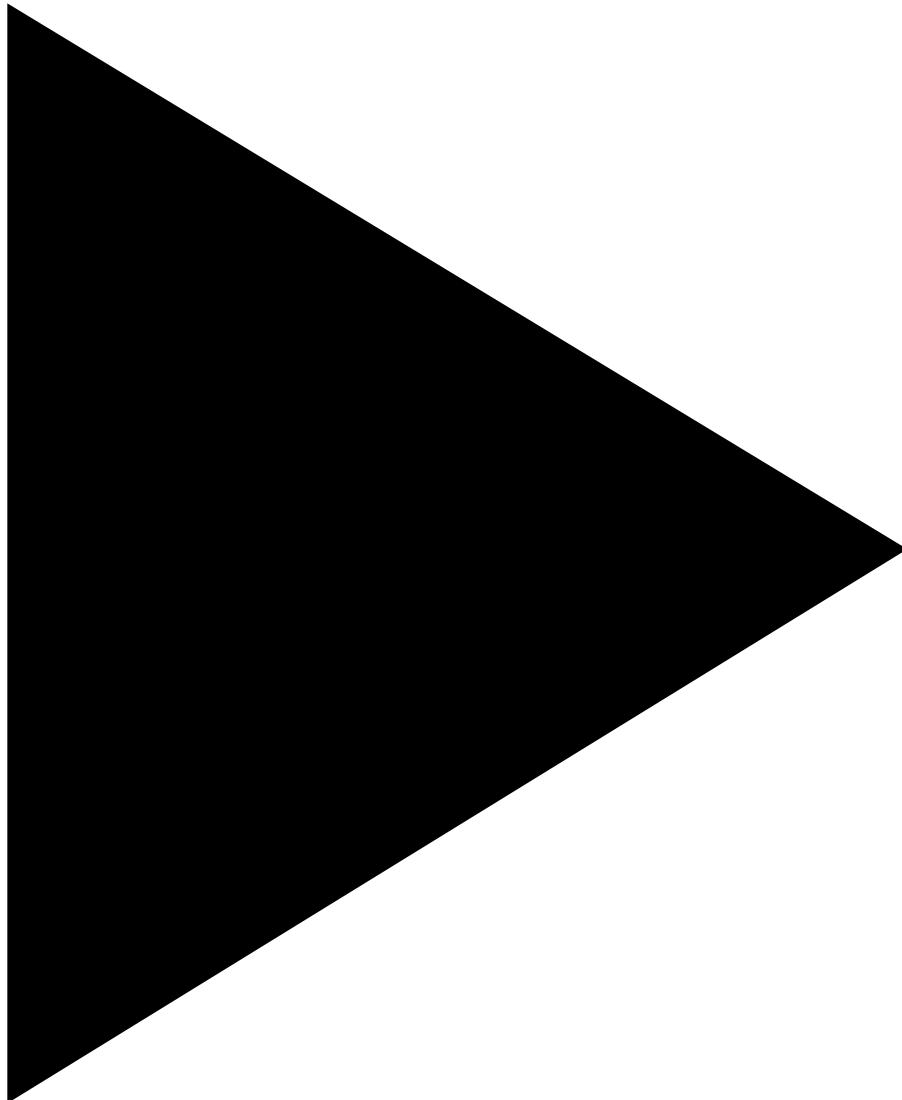
These websites which were critical of the US, NATO, and issues pertaining to Russia, targeted American millennials. It is believed to be part of a widespread Kremlin disinformation campaign which aims to continue sowing discord in the United States ahead of the 2020 presidential elections. Donald Trump is expected to become the Republican Party nominee for president.

The pages removed by Facebook are run by Maffick Media based in Berlin, Germany. The owner of this firm is Ruptly, a video news agency subsidiary of RT. Ruptly owns 51 percent of Maffick Media. The rest is owned by Maffick Media CEO Anissa Naouai, an American journalist of Tunisian descent.

Maffick Media isn't registered in the U.S. but has hired American contractors and freelancers to work on the closed-down websites.

Facebook suspended the pages on Feb. 15, saying the people behind them didn't disclose where the pages are run from. These people also didn't disclose their affiliation with their parent company (in this case Ruptly). All three websites remain offline today.

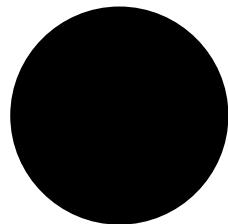
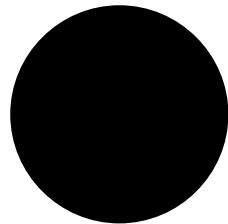
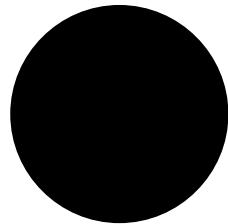
CNN said the affected pages are Soapbox (a current-affairs page), an environmental channel named Waste-Ed, and the historical channel called Backthen. It said these sites had over 30 million video views in a short period of time.

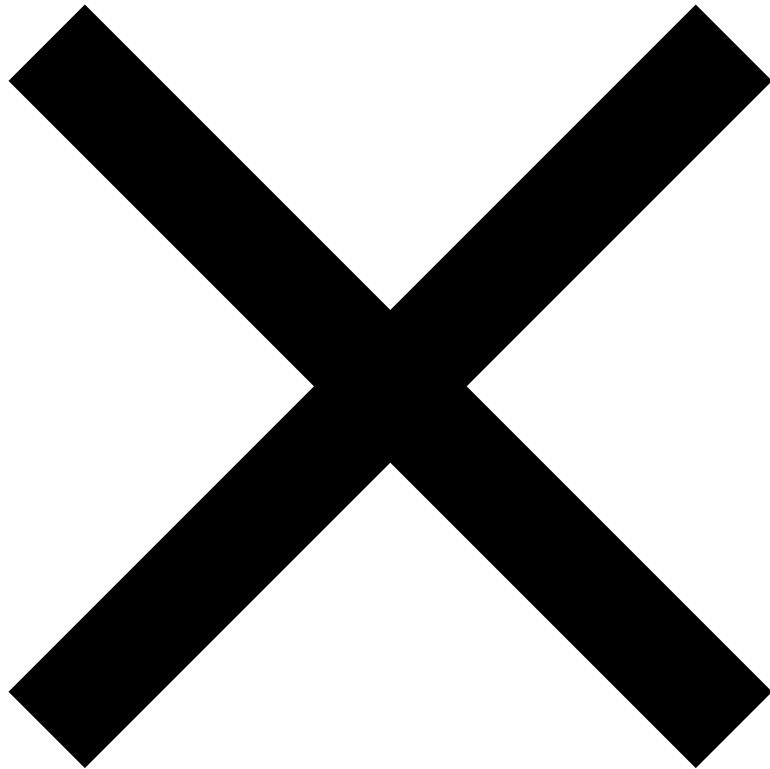


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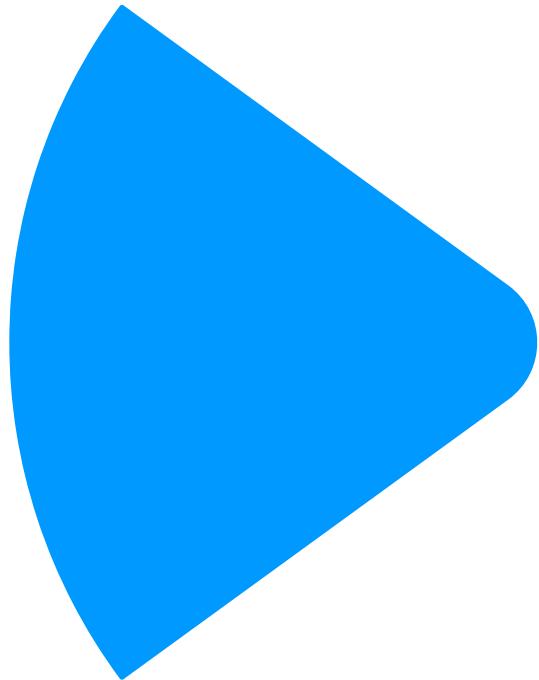


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"People connecting with Pages shouldn't be misled about who's behind them," said a Facebook spokesperson. "Just as we've stepped up our enforcement of coordinated inauthentic behavior and financially motivated spam over the past year, we'll continue improving so people can get more information about the Pages they follow."

As expected, [Maffick Media blasted Facebook's](#) closure of its pages and Facebook's policies as "new McCarthyism." For its part, RT said Maffick was singled out for the sole reason that Russia is supporting the firm.

RT claims no official requests to explain the websites were filed with Maffick Media. It also alleges the company was never notified before the fact.

RT blames CNN for this controversy engulfing itself and Maffick Media. It claims the accounts were suspended only after CNN aired a report with the headline "Kremlin funds viral videos aimed at millennials."

In its story, CNN branded all three pages as part of the Kremlin's "influence campaign" targeting unsuspecting young American adults. CNN also said Maffick Media is "mostly owned" by Ruptly (a subsidiary of RT) "and is thus in the Kremlin's back pocket."

RT also attacked CNN for repeatedly accusing Maffick Media of concealing its suspected ties to Russia to mislead its audience.

[Margarita Simonyan, RT Editor-in-Chief](#), said Facebook didn't seem to have an issue with the pages until CNN brought up the issue.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said RT "has to stand up for its rights" in the face of this controversy. Peskov also inexplicably remains optimistic the pages will be restored.

"I think of course RT has to stand up for its interests and receive explanations regarding this particular company and what the reasons were," said Peskov.